

~BALSAM, BALSAM OF GILEAD (287)

- The term balsam applies to any of the many plants, shrubs, and trees producing an aromatic and, commonly, oily and resinous substance. There are balsamiferous trees among the fir, spruce, poplar, and other tree families. The balsamic oil is used medicinally, usually containing benzoic or cinnamic acid, and as a perfume.
- Balsam plants and trees were always highly prized by the peoples of the Orient. The first mention of balsam oil **Hebrew**, *bo'sem*, *be'sem*, or *ba-sam*' occurs at;
- Oil for the luminary, **balsam** oil for the anointing oil and for perfumed incense. (**Exodus 25:6**)
- With reference to its use as an ingredient in the holy anointing oil of the tabernacle.
- And oil for the luminary and **balsam** oil for the anointing oil and for the perfumed incense (**Exodus 35:8**)
- And the **balsam** oil and the oil for illumination and for the anointing oil and for the perfumed incense. (**Exodus 35:28**)
- The **Hebrew** word is sometimes translated as **perfumes**, **sweet**, or **spice**, according to the context.
- As for you, take to yourself the choicest **perfumes**, myrrh in congealed drops five hundred units, and sweet cinnamon in half that amount, two hundred and fifty units, and sweet calamus two hundred and fifty units. (**Exodus 30:23**)
- How beautiful your expressions of endearment are, O my sister, my bride! How much better your expressions of endearment are than wine and the fragrance of your oils than all sorts of **perfume**! (**Song of Solomon 4:10**)
- Spikenard and saffron, cane and cinnamon, along with all sorts of trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest **perfumes**. (**Song of Solomon 4:14**)
- Awake, O north wind, and come in, O south wind. Breathe upon

my garden. Let its **perfumes** trickle. Let my dear one come into his garden and eat its choicest fruits. (**Song of Solomon 4:16**)

- His cheeks are like a garden bed of **spice**, towers of scented herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping with liquid myrrh. (**Song of Solomon 5:13**)
- My own dear one has gone down to his garden, to the garden beds of **spice** plants, to shepherd among the gardens, and to pick lilies. (**Song of Solomon 6:2**)
- My own dear one has gone down to his garden, to the garden beds of **spice** plants, to shepherd among the gardens, and to pick lilies. (**Song of Solomon 6:2**)
- And it must occur that instead of **balsam** oil there will come to be merely a musty smell, and instead of a belt, a rope, and instead of an artistic hair arrangement, baldness, and instead of a rich garment, a girding of sackcloth, a brand mark instead of prettiness. (**Isaiah 3:24**)
- Its aromatic fragrance is contrasted with a musty smell.
- The **balsam** used for the tabernacle service in the wilderness evidently came from outside of Palestine, perhaps from Egypt. During King Solomon's reign the preciousness of **balsam** oil caused it to be ranked along with the gold and precious stones among the treasures that the queen of Sheba brought as gifts, it was also included in the tribute paid by the kings of many lands to the wise king in Jerusalem.
- Finally she arrived at Jerusalem with a very impressive train, camels carrying balsam oil and very much gold and precious stones, and she came on in to Solomon and began to speak to him all that happened to be close to her heart. (**1 Kings 10:2**)
- Then she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold and a very great deal of balsam oil and precious stones. There never came anymore the like of that **balsam** oil for quantity such as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. (**1 Kings 10:10**)
- And they were bringing each his gift, articles of silver and articles of gold and garments and armor and balsam oil, horses and mules, as a yearly matter of course. (**1 Kings 10:25**)

- And the queen of Sheba herself heard the report about Solomon, and she proceeded to come to test Solomon with perplexing questions at Jerusalem, along with a very impressive train and camels carrying **balsam** oil, and gold in great quantity, and precious stones. At length she came in to Solomon and spoke with him about everything that happened to be close to her heart. (2 Chronicles 9:1)
- Then she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and **balsam** oil in very great quantity, and precious stones, and there had not come to be the like of that balsam oil which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. (2 Chronicles 9:9)
- And they were bringing each his gift, articles of silver and articles of gold and garments, armor and **balsam** oil, horses and mules as a yearly matter of course. (2 Chronicles 9:24)
- It was among the precious things stored in the kings treasure-house that Hezekiah unwisely showed to the emissaries from Babylon.
- And Hezekiah proceeded to listen to them and show them all his treasure-house, the silver and the gold and the **balsam** oil and the good oil and his armory and all that was to be found in his treasures. There proved to be nothing that Hezekiah did not show them in his own house and in all his dominion. (2 Kings 20:13)
- And Hezekiah came to have riches and glory to a very great amount, and storehouses he made for himself for silver and for gold and for precious stones and for **balsam** oil and for shields and for all the desirable articles. (2 Chronicles 32:27)
- So Hezekiah began to rejoice over them and proceeded to show them his treasure-house, the silver and the gold and the **balsam** oil and the good oil and all his armory and all that was to be found in his treasures. There proved to be nothing that Hezekiah did not show them in his own house and in all his dominion. (Isaiah 39:2)
- It was used in the embalming, though not in the Egyptian way, of King Asa's body.
- So they buried him in his grand burial place that he had excavated for himself in the City of David, and they laid him in

the bed that had been filled with **balsam** oil and different sorts of ointment mixed in an ointment of special make. Further, they made an extraordinarily great funeral burning for him. (2 **Chronicles 16:14**)

- The **English** word **embalm** appears to be originally derived from the **Hebrew** *ba-sam'*. Esther was massaged with aromatic **balsam** oil during the final six-month period prior to her appearance before King Ahasuerus.
- And when the turn of each young woman arrived to go in to King Ahasuerus after it had happened to her according to the women's regulation for twelve months, for that was the way the days of their massage procedure were gradually fulfilled, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with **balsam** oil and with the massages of the women. (**Esther 2:12**)
- The **balsam** **Hebrew**, *tsori'*, in Gilead appears to have been of a unique quality and possessed of special medicinal properties.
- Is there no **balsam** in Gilead? Or is there no healer there? Why is it, then, that the recuperation of the daughter of my people has not come up? (**Jeremiah 8:22**)
- Go up to **Gilead** and get some **balsam**, O virgin daughter of Egypt. In vain you have multiplied the means of healing. There is no mending for you. (**Jeremiah 46:11**)
- This **balsam** is first mentioned as among the articles carried by the caravan of Ishmaelites from **Gilead**, East of the Jordan, and to whom Joseph was subsequently sold.
- Then they sat down to eat bread. When they raised their eyes and took a look, why, here was a caravan of Ishmaelites that was coming from **Gilead**, and their camels were carrying labdanum and **balsam** and resinous bark, on their way to take it down to Egypt. (**Genesis 37:25**)
- At this Judah said to his brothers; What profit would there be in case we killed our brother and did cover over his blood? (**Genesis 37:26**)
- Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and do not let our hand be upon him. After all, he is our brother, our flesh. So they

listened to their brother. (**Genesis 37:27**)

- Now men, Midianite merchants, went passing by. Hence they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the water-pit and then sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty silver pieces. Eventually these brought Joseph into Egypt. (**Genesis 37:28**)
- Jacob later included it in with **the finest products of the land** when sending a gift to Egypt with his returning sons.
- So Israel their father said to them; If, then, that is the case, do this: Take the finest products of the land in your receptacles and carry them down to the man as a gift. A little **balsam**, and a little honey, labdanum and resinous bark, pistachio nuts and almonds. (**Genesis 43:11**)
- Judah and the land of Israel themselves were your traders. For the wheat of Minnith and special foodstuff and honey and oil and **balsam**, your articles of exchange were given. (**Ezekiel 27:17**)
- The wealthy merchants of Tyre imported it from the kingdom of Judah.
- References to the healing virtues of **balsam**, chiefly as a cure for wounds, are common in ancient literature. All references to such healing properties in the Scriptures are made by Jeremiah. He uses these, however, in a figurative sense, first when lamenting the spiritual breakdown in Judah.
- Why are we sitting still? Gather yourselves together, and let us enter into the fortified cities and be silent there. For Yehowah our God has himself put us to silence, and he gives us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against Yehowah. (**Jeremiah 8:14**)
- There was a hoping for peace, but no good came, for a time of healing, but, look! Terror! (**Jeremiah 8:15**)
- Over the breakdown of the daughter of my people I have become shattered. I have grown sad. Outright astonishment has seized hold of me. (**Jeremiah 8:21**)
- Is there no **balsam in Gilead**? Or is there **no healer there**? Why is it, then, that the **recuperation** of the daughter of my people has

not come up? (**Jeremiah 8:22**)

- Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, **greasing him with oil** in the name of Yehowah. (**James 5:14**)
- And the **prayer of faith** will make the indisposed one well, and Yehowah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him. (**James 5:15**)
- Then in chiding Egypt as to her vain efforts to avoid defeat by Babylon;
- Go up to Gilead and get some **balsam**, O virgin daughter of Egypt. In vain you have multiplied the means of healing. There is no mending for you. (**Jeremiah 46:11**)
- The nations have heard your dishonor and your own outcry has filled the land. For they have stumbled, mighty man against mighty man. Together they have fallen down, both of them. (**Jeremiah 46:12**)
- The word that Yehowah spoke to Jeremiah the prophet as regards the coming of Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon to strike down the land of Egypt. (**Jeremiah 46:13**)
- And finally in pronouncing God's judgment of calamity against Babylon.
- Suddenly Babylon has fallen, so that she is broken. Howl over her, you people. Take **balsam** for her pain. Perhaps she may be healed. (**Jeremiah 51:8**)
- We would have healed Babylon, but she has not been healed. Leave her, you people, and let us go each one to his own land. For clear to the heavens her judgment has reached, and it has been lifted up to the cloudy skies. (**Jeremiah 51:9**)
- Yehowah has brought forth deeds of righteousness for us. Come and do let us recount in Zion the work of Yehowah our God. (**Jeremiah 51:10**)
- Identification of the specific plants or trees represented by the **Hebrew** words *bo'sem* and *tsori'* is not definite. The name **balsam of**

Gilead has been applied to a **shrublike evergreen tree** called *Commiphora opobalsamum* or, *Commiphora gileadensis*.

- Its greenish-yellow oily resin is gathered by making incisions in the stem and branches, and the little balls of sap that form are later collected. While this particular tree is found chiefly in South Arabia, the Jewish historian Josephus indicates that it was cultivated around Jericho in Solomon's time, and the Greek geographer Strabo records that in Roman times it was also grown beside the Sea of Galilee.

- It has been suggested that *tsori'* may refer to the **mastic** tree, *Pistacia lentiscus*, which produces a **pale-yellow fragrant gum** called **mastic**, as well as an oil used for medicinal purposes obtained from the bark, leaves, and berries. The tree is common in Palestine, and its name in **Arabic** is very similar to the **Hebrew** *tsori'*.